



## The Impact of Foundation Year on Students' Language Skills in English Department

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### Abstract

*The main purpose of this study is to determine the impact of a foundation year in an English Department and its role in developing students' language skills. The main research questions for this academic study are: Does a foundation year have a positive impact on students' language skills in English Department? Does a foundation year prepare students for their academic studies in English Department? It is believed in the English department that having an active foundation year is highly beneficial. To obtain data, an open-ended survey is used involving 110 non-native English students (57 male and 53 female) who graduated from the foundation year at the University of Leicester and the University of Nottingham, prior to starting their academic studies in the Department of English at both universities. In order to analyse the data obtained, the researcher used a mixed methods research approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher follows the work of Chen (2021) as an adopted model. The current study concludes that the foundation year has a positive impact on students' language skills and academic performance, and prepares students for their academic studies in the English Departments.*

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## المخلص

الهدف الرئيسي للدراسة الحالية هو تحديد تأثير السنة التمهيديّة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزيّة ودورها في تطوير مهارات اللغة لدى الطلاب. ولذلك فقد طرحت هذه الدراسة مجموعة من الأسئلة البحثية وهي: هل السنة التمهيديّة لها تأثير إيجابي على مهارات اللغة لدى الطلاب في قسم اللغة الإنجليزيّة؟ هل السنة التمهيديّة تعد الطلاب لدراساتهم الأكاديمية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزيّة؟ يعتقد قسم اللغة الإنجليزيّة أن وجود سنة التمهيديّة نشطة مفيد للغاية. ومن أجل الحصول على البيانات، تم استخدام استبيان مفتوح يشمل ١١٠ طالبًا، (٥٧ طالب و ٥٣ طالبة)، تخرجوا من السنة التمهيديّة في جامعة ليستر وجامعة نوتنغهام، قبل البدء بالدراسة الأكاديمية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزيّة في كلتا الجامعتين. ولتحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها، فقد استخدم الباحث مناهج بحث متنوّعة التي تشمل كلاً من الأساليب الكمية والنوعية. ويتبع الباحث عمل تشين (2021) كنموذج معتمد. وخلصت الدراسة الحالية إلى أن السنة التمهيديّة لها تأثير إيجابي على مهارات اللغة والأداء الأكاديمي للطلاب، وتجهز الطلاب لدراساتهم الأكاديمية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزيّة.

### 1. Introduction

A foundation year is a programme offered by some universities and colleges to students who may not meet the entry requirements for direct admission into a degree programme. The foundation year is designed to provide students with the necessary academic skills, knowledge, and qualifications needed to succeed in their chosen degree programme. The foundation year serves as a critical period during which students are equipped with foundational language competencies, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, which are crucial for academic success and effective communication in an English-dominant academic environment.

If in high school students study in any language other than English, they often face significant academic difficulties when admitted to the English Department of a university, especially in their first year. The primary challenge is their lack of prior education in English at school. At university, students may struggle with the need to understand, write, read, listen, and converse in English. Consequently, some students may find it difficult to pass exams successfully in their first year and face the threat of failure. It is evident that universities aim is to prepare students for a bright future through the provision of excellent knowledge and increased performance. Establishing a foundation year at university is believed to effectively prepare students academically, enabling them to successfully engage with their university studies. The current study depends on the work of Chen (2021) who states that the foundation year in the English Department has a positive impact on non-native English students' language skills in the form of reading, writing, speaking and listening because it plays a great role in enhancing students' language skills positively. Consequently, it is very important to know why it is essential for students to have a good level of English prior to starting their academic career at university. According to Kadwa and Alshenqeeti (2020, p. 55), if a student has a good level of English, he or she can easily overcome the difficulties of studying at all stages of higher education.

#### 1.1 The Problem

There is no doubt that when students are admitted to a university, especially in the English Department, they have many dreams for their future. They are very eager to complete their university studies with a high level of proficiency in English. It is obvious that students' levels of English vary; some are very good while others are not. If some students do not complete their studies successfully, especially in their first year of university, this may have a negative impact on their psychology. Such a negative impact may affect students' further years of study at university. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been a lack of academic research with regard to the role of the foundation year at university in the English Departments of state universities in Iraq. This is due to the absence of a foundation year at Iraqi state universities. Therefore, in the current study, the researcher attempts to determine the impact of the foundation year on students' language skills in English Departments.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study can be summarized as:

- 1- Highlighting the positive impact of the foundation year on students' language skills in English Departments.
- 2- Helping other researchers understand the importance of having a foundation year at university, especially in English Departments.

### **1.3 Limits of the Study**

The current academic study is limited to:

- 1- Students' views with regard to the impact of the foundation year on students' language skills in English Departments.
- 2- Those students who completed all courses of the foundation year at the University of Leicester and the University of Nottingham during the academic year 2022-2023 prior to starting their academic studies in the each English Department.

### **1.4 The Aims of the Study**

The current research has two main aims. First, to determine the importance of having a foundation year in English Departments. Second, to highlight the benefits of a foundation year in terms of students' language skills.

### **1.5 The Research Questions**

The study aims to address the following research questions:

- 1- Does a foundation year in English Department have a positive impact on students' language skills?
- 2- Does a foundation year prepare students for their academic studies in English Department?

### **1.6 The Hypotheses**

This research study hypothesizes that:

1- A foundation year has a positive impact on students' language skills in English Department.

2- A foundation year prepares students academically for their academic studies in English Department.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 What is a Foundation Year?**

According to Yök (2016, cited in Uysal 2019, p. 453), the Foundation Year (Prepared Programme) is a programme designed to teach the rules of a foreign language in order to help students understand both written and spoken language. Moreover, it provides facilities for students when it comes to expressing themselves in communication based on the regulations of the institutions in higher education. For Baker and Heron (2023, 1289), a Foundation Year is an opportunity for preparing students for undergraduate studies.

### **2.2 The Duties of the Foundation Year**

Walker, Matthew and Black (2004, p. 49), believe that when students attend school they know what their duties and roles are because they study in that school for several years. However, when they are admitted to university they are not familiar with their new roles as higher education students. Subsequently, students may feel alienated and may not develop an identity as a university student. This could have a negative impact on their academic studies. Consequently, a Foundation Year teaches students what their role will be at university. Therefore, having foundation year at university is essential.

### **2.3 Should Research be done with regard to the Foundation Year?**

According to Hussain, Albeshar and Farid (2017, 38), a Foundation Year acts as a bridge between school and university. In order for the Foundation Year to be better and more active, research should be conducted with regard to how practitioners can constantly improve the Foundation Year and prepare students for their university studies and a professional life.

### **2.4 The Importance of Learning English**

Uysal (2019, p. 452) believes that, as a means of communication between dissimilar cultures, English is becoming increasingly important over time. Al-Hadhrami and Amzat (2012, p. 55) and Akpur, Alci and Karataş (2016, p. 466) mention that the increasing importance of English is due to two main reasons. First, proficiency in English helps to ensure a better career in the future. Second, it is the language of technology.

### **2.5 The Advantages of the Foundation Year**

Sanders and Daly (2013, p. 44) point out that the purpose of the Foundation Year is to prepare students to engage in degree-level work, and to equip them with study skills that increase their self-confidence as students. In general,

Foundation Year courses focus heavily on students' academic skills and help them familiarize themselves with their programmes of study. This is why Foundation Years are constantly increasing in importance and becoming more popular.

### **2.6 Some Recommendations for the Foundation Year**

Wood and Lithauer (2005, p.1009) state that it is true that the foundation year has many advantages, but there are also disadvantages. For example, some subjects are repeated in many courses, and some of these subjects are not related to the academic study that students want to pursue after the foundation year. Consequently, it can be argued and recommended that the curriculum in Foundation Year courses should be closely related to the subjects that students are proposing to study at the higher education institution to which they have applied. Otherwise, the foundation year may have more disadvantages than advantages. It is worth noting that the mentioned recommendation by Wood and Lithauer (2005) should not be ignored at all.

### **2.7 Students who attend Foundation Year Courses**

Generally, three types of students are required to participate in Foundation Year Courses. The first type, students who do not have the necessary grades to engage in academic studies for the course of study they have applied for. The second type is students who want to improve one of the skills necessary for the institution to which they have applied. The third type, students who need precise skills for their chosen studies. If students are in one or more of the above three categories, they are not allowed to immediately attend undergraduate studies. They must attend Foundation Year courses to improve their academic level and develop the necessary skills. It is worth noting that students are assured of successful completion of their undergraduate studies when they have successfully completed Foundation Year courses (Sanders and Daly, 2013, p. 44).

### **2.8 The Definitions of Types of Language Skills**

Markström (2019) provides some precise definitions for listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as four basic types of language skills. According to Markström (2019, p. 5), listening skill can be defined as the ability to comprehend the spoken language communicated by others. Speaking skill, on the other hand, refers to an individual's capability to produce spoken language in a manner that is comprehensible to others. Regarding the definitions of writing and reading skills, Markström (2019, p. 7) mentions that reading skill is the ability to comprehend and interpret written text authored by others. However, writing skill pertains to someone's ability to generate written language for personal use or for the benefit of others.

### **2.9 Students' Difficulties with Regard to Language Skills**



### 1- Reading Skills

According to Davies and Elias (2013, p. 187), reading skills are not just associated with reading a text. In academic studies, there are several reasons for reading a text. First, students need to skim and scan a particular piece of information. Second, in order to obtain new information. Third, to summarize and gather information when they have several texts to criticize and evaluate with regard to a particular topic. Fourth, to determine only the information that is relevant to the topic. It is believed that the main reason for students' having problems with regard to reading is due to their having a limited vocabulary and poor linguistic knowledge in the second language. Thomas (2018, pp.118-119) states that reading skills are one of the most important subjects at all stages of academic study, and one which takes a great deal of time on the part of students. Moreover, he believes that there are three reasons why students have some difficulty when it comes to reading texts. First, understanding the meaning of new words. Second, breaking down complex sentences into simple ones to ensure understanding. Third, reading slowly. Alarfaj and Alshumaimeri (2012, p. 612) state that a training programme (Foundation Year) plays a key role in increasing students' ability with regard to reading speed and comprehension (literal, deductive, and critical reasoning).

### 2- Writing Skills

Simon (2017, p. 11) mentions that most students do not have enough knowledge of using academic language in academic writing, so they cannot write and express themselves accurately and academically. Consequently, they cannot produce academic texts in a good academic style. Bruce (2011, p. 85) points out that in order for the reader to know what is happening in students' academic writing and what is being discussed academically, students need to be well prepared before they engage in academic study at university.

### 3- Speaking Skills

According to Jordan (1997, p. 193), the duties of students when it comes to speaking skills tasks at university are to present and participate in seminars, exchange ideas, and ask and answer questions. However, Wahidah (2016, p.8) and Chand (2021, p. 51) state that mastering speaking skills is one of the most difficult tasks for students who do not speak English. There are many factors that cause problems for students including poor vocabulary, lack of confidence, hesitation to a fear of making mistakes when speaking, feeling shy, pronunciation, and poor grammar. Baker and Heron (2023, p. 1300) point out that the Foundation Year encourages students to speak academically because, during the Foundation Year, expert and trained teachers are prepared to teach students such skills.

### 4- Listening Skills

Philip (2019, p. 25) points out that, in order for students to understand exactly what others are saying, they should have adequate ability with regard to syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation. Consequently, listening skills are considered one of the most difficult skills to master. If students do not have a good level of listening comprehension and techniques before they start their first year at university, they will encounter misunderstandings when communicating in English between themselves, with their teachers, and during listening tests. Therefore, it is essential to have a Foundation Year in all universities to teach students exactly how to listen and to be able to answer all the listening test questions.

## **2.10 Methods of Data Collection**

### **2.10.1 Data Collection Tools**

To obtain the data from students about the impact of the Foundation Year on students' language skills in an English Department, a 10 item open-ended questionnaire was used. Regarding the data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to accurately analyse the participants' perspectives. All participants were asked to submit written responses for every item included in the survey. Moreover, all participants were given sufficient time to provide their views on each item accurately. It is worth noting that all participants were foreign students from different countries.

To analyse the gathered data, a Likert scale was utilised by the researcher. This scale provides all participants with five options, allowing them to indicate their views on each item: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5. To guarantee that the survey items were clear, before requesting the participants to respond, the researcher carried out a pilot study to obtain feedback about the survey items from a group of students who had graduated from the Foundation Year at the Universities of Leicester and Nottingham. The responses were collected from the pilot group a month after the distribution of the survey. Consequently, the face validity of the survey was determined.

### **2.10.2 Participants**

To obtain the data, 110 non- English native students (57 male and 53 female) who had graduated from the Foundation Year at the Universities of Leicester and Nottingham, and who were starting their academic year at the respective Departments of English participated in the current study survey. Sufficient time was given for them to write their views with regard to all the survey items. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 26. The participants were Kurds, Arabs, Iranians, Turks and Chinese.

### **2.10.3 Validity and Reliability**

According to Elzubair (2017, p. 61), validity refers to collected data in an academic study that is clear, accurate and effective about any point that is being investigated. Therefore, in order to be sure that all survey items were clear, appropriate and related to the current study, as jury members, some university professors and assistant professors were asked to evaluate all the items prior to data collection. With regard to each item they provided some valuable views and suggestions. Consequently, some changes were made to each item. In Appendix (1) information about the jury members is provided.

In terms of reliability, the same or similar data should be obtained when the same participants express their views regarding all items of the survey at two different times (Ibid, 61). Therefore, after initially collecting data from the participants in this academic study, the researcher asked the same participants to indicate their views on each item a month later, to verify consistency with their previous responses.

### 2.11 Data Analysis

To determine each item's P-value, mean score, standard deviation, and percentage of participants' views with regard to each item, SPSS 22 program was used to analyze the data collected. According to Frost (2024), to show the degree of internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha is used. The scale of the Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1. Higher values signify a greater level of the agreement between items. According to the SPSS 22 program, the Cronbach's alpha value for all items of the survey was 0.86, which is greater than 0.60. Therefore, the internal consistency is accepted for all items.

Regarding the P-value, it should be mentioned that when the P-value result is equal to, or lower than, 0.05, the result is deemed to be significant. The P-value is used in academic researches to know the significance of the results of all items one after another.

Participants' responses to item (1):								
"The foundation year significantly enhances students' reading skills by introducing essential concepts and strategies."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 1	4.55%	2.72%	0.00%	48.18%	44.55%	4.25	3.84	0.03
Participants' responses to item (2):								
"Completion of the foundation year notably improves students' capacity to express ideas clearly and effectively in writing."								



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 2	1.82%	3.64%	6.36%	38.18%	50%	4.31	3.88	0.04
<b>Participants' responses to item (3):</b>								
<b>“Foundation year courses have a very positive effect on students' ability to speak academically.”</b>								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 3	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	38.18%	61.82%	4.62	4.12	0.008
<b>Participants' responses to item (4):</b>								
<b>“The foundation year plays an important role in developing students' listening skills.”</b>								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 4	10%	8.18%	4.55%	41.82%	35.45%	3.85	3.54	0.002
<b>Participants' responses to item (5):</b>								
<b>“The foundation year in terms of language learning significantly contributes to students' understanding of grammar rules and structures.”</b>								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 5	0.00%	11.82%	8.18%	56.36%	23.64%	3.92	3.50	0.01
<b>Participants' responses to item (6):</b>								
<b>“Foundation year courses play a positive role in boosting students' confidence with regard to their academic studies.”</b>								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 6	0.00%	0.00%	10.91%	61.82%	27.27%	4.16	3.68	0.009
<b>Participants' responses to item (7):</b>								
<b>“The foundation year increases students' motivation with regard to university studies.”</b>								

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 7	0.00%	0.00%	1.82%	65.45%	32.73%	4.31	3.81	0.01
<b>Participants' responses to item (8):</b> "All students admitted to the university should attend foundation year courses."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 8	26.36%	27.27%	13.64%	22.73%	10%	2.63	2.74	0.006
<b>Participants' responses to item (9):</b> "After successfully completing foundation year courses, students feel excellently prepared for university study."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 9	3.64%	1.82%	5.44%	34.55%	54.55%	4.35	3.93	0.01
<b>Participants' responses to item (10):</b> "A foundation year on its own has a positive impact on improving students' language and academic performance."								
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation	P-value
Item 10	39.09%	34.55%	0.00%	15.45%	10.91%	2.25	2.17	0.03

## 2.12 Results and Discussions

As far as item (1), the mean score is 4.25, and the standard deviation is 3.84. For this item the P-value is 0.03. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05. 48.18% of the participants agree and 44.55% of them strongly agree with the statement. They state that there is no doubt that Foundation Year instructors teach all students reading skills strategies and enhance students' academic ability in terms of this skill. Furthermore, students are taught how to answer all the questions on the Reading Skills tests, because finding the answers requires high level academic techniques. It should be noted that most of the texts prepared for students during the Reading Skills tests are not in the curriculum and are long. Consequently, if students are not familiar with the techniques for answering questions, they will not be able to find most of the answers, and they will not pass the tests. Therefore, it is

essential for students to participate in Foundation Year courses before starting their first academic year at university. On the other hand, 4.55% of the participants strongly disagree and 2.72% of them disagree with the statement. They mention that students are often not taught reading skills effectively in high school, consequently when they attend Foundation Year courses, they fail to benefit, as the texts provided are lengthy and challenging to understand. Therefore, students are discouraged from enhancing their reading abilities. Generally, the results of the current item are in line with those of the studies by Davies and Elias (2013), and Alarfaj and Alshumaimeri (2012).

As for item (2), the mean score is 4.31, and the standard deviation is 3.88. For this item the P-value is 0.04. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

38.18% of the participants agree and 50% of them strongly agree with the statement. The point out that Foundation Year courses play a very positive role in introducing students to writing skills. First, students are taught how to write academically. Second, all courses teach students how to write in a cohesive and coherent manner thus demonstrating academic competence. Students are taught how to construct an argument pattern between all the aspects of a piece of writing. This makes students' academic writing very interesting. Some 6.36% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 1.82% of the participants strongly disagree and 3.64% of them disagree with the statement. They believe that most of the topics which students write about are far from their specialty, which makes it very difficult for them. In this case, the Foundation Year does not have any positive impact on students' writing skills. Generally, the results with regard to this item are in agreement with the study of Bruce (2011).

In the case of item (3), the mean score is 4.62, and the standard deviation is 4.12. For this item the P-value is 0.008. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

38.18% of the participants agree and 61.82% of them strongly agree with the statement. They say the Foundation Year courses have a very positive effect on their ability to speak academically. When speaking in another language, students usually have some problems with grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Foundation courses have an excellent effect in terms of improving grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, because students' strengths and weaknesses in this respect are identified in all classes. Instructors always try to improve students' grammar and pronunciation, and teach them many new words every day. Furthermore, students are trained daily on how to communicate with each other academically without feeling shy, and how to respond to each other's views and questions. In addition, students are taught how to make an academic presentation. The results of the current item are in line with the study of Baker and Heron (2023).

As for item (4), the mean score is 3.85, and the standard deviation is 3.54. For this item the P-value is 0.002. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

41.82% of the participants agree and 35.45% of them strongly agree with the statement. They say that there is no doubt that the Foundation Year has a tremendous impact on improving students' listening skills in two main ways. First, students are taught the techniques of answering questions associated with the Listening Skills tests. Second, students are taught how to write down only the important information when listening to a video or a speaker and then are required to discuss the key points. Some 4.55% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 10% of the participants strongly disagree and 8.18% of

them disagree with the statement. They state that in the Foundation Year Listening Skills courses, students often struggle with understanding videos or speakers in other languages due to exposure to various accents and dialects. This diversity can hinder their ability to adapt and understand, especially if they lack prior experience with the language. Generally, the results with regard to this item are in agreement with the study of Philip (2019).

With regard to item (5), the mean score is 3.92, and the standard deviation is 3.50. For this item the P-value is 0.01. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

56.36% of the participants agree with the statement, and 23.64% of them strongly agree with the statement. They state that a Foundation Year in grammar instruction is essential for laying the groundwork for basic linguistic structures and concepts. It provides a framework for understanding language conventions and principles, establishing the foundation for successful communication. As students advance in their language proficiency journey, it develops linguistic competence via methodical instruction and practice, empowering them to confidently manage the complexity of grammar. Moreover, having a good level of grammar makes students also have a good level of writing, reading and speaking. Some 8.18% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 11.82% of the participants disagree with the statement. They believe that in high school students learn some grammar because it is included throughout high school, so if they do not study grammar modules in Foundation Year courses, it does not have a negative impact on their language and grammar development.

In the case of item (6), the mean score is 4.16, and the standard deviation is 3.68. For this item the P-value is 0.009. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

61.82% of the participants agree and 27.27% of them strongly agree with the statement. They say it is undeniable that the Foundation Year courses play a very positive role in boosting students' confidence. Generally, Foundation Year courses typically increase students' levels in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar skills. Furthermore, the Foundation Year enables students to read, understand and speak without difficulty. Whenever students have no problems in reading sources, writing and discussing in the language of their department, they will have excellent confidence because they know that they will not face any problems worth mentioning in the first year of university. Some 10.91% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer.

As for item (7), the mean score is 4.31, and the standard deviation is 3.81. For this item the P-value is 0.01. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

65.45% of the participants agree and 32.73% of them strongly agree with the statement. They point out that when students are participating in Foundation Year courses their instructors introduce them to the university atmosphere, their main curriculum, exams, conduct assignments, assessment methods, the use of the library and how to overcome learning difficulties. Whenever students feel they have no problems in the learning process in general, such as passing exams, conducting assignments and overcoming learning difficulties, they are automatically motivated to make more effort to learn more about their curricula and prepare themselves for university life. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Foundation Year in university has a very positive effect on students' motivation. Some 1.82% of the

participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer.

As for item (8), the mean score is 2.63, and the standard deviation is 2.47. For this item the P-value is 0.006. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

22.73% of the participants agree and 10% of them strongly agree with the statement. They believe that all students admitted to university should attend Foundation Year courses because the courses generally provide good benefits in terms of improving students' language skills and academic level. Some 13.64% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 26.36% of the participants strongly disagree and 27.27% of them disagree with the statement. They state that all students admitted to university should not be required to attend Foundation Year courses. Only those students who are not academically qualified should attend such courses.

With regard to item (9), the mean score is 4.35, and the standard deviation is 3.93. For this item the P-value is 0.01. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

34.55% of the participants agree and 54.55% of them strongly agree with the statement. They state that, in general, after successfully completing Foundation Year courses, students feel very clearly that they are academically prepared to start university because their levels of reading, writing, speaking, academic performance, critical thinking, and conducting research have improved significantly. This will cause students to look forward to their first year at university with a great deal of confidence. Some 5.44% of the participants were neutral and did not express a view with regard to this particular item because they were not sure about the answer. However, 3.64% of the participants strongly disagree and 1.82% of them disagree with the statement. They believe that students do not feel ready to start university academic studies after completing Foundation Year courses because in the foundation year students do not study all modules in detail. Instead, they are only introduced to some modules, not all of them.

As for item (10), the mean score is 2.25, and the standard deviation is 2.17. For this item the P-value is 0.03. Therefore, the result is statistically significant because it is less than 0.05.

15.45% of the participants agree and 10.91% of the participants strongly agree with the statement. They believe that students can obtain a great deal of academic information just by attending Foundation Year academic courses. After students have gained new knowledge about subjects related to their academic studies at university, they feel that the Foundation Year has had a very positive impact on their academic and language levels. On the other hand, 39.09% of the participants strongly disagree and 34.55% of them disagree with the statement. They state that participation in Foundation Year courses alone will not benefit students academically and improve their language skills if these two points are not taken into account. First, it is essential that the curricula of all academic courses be very advanced, and that the curricula should complement each other from course to course. Second, all instructors must be very well prepared and be knowledgeable. They must know how to prepare students for their future academic courses at university.

Generally speaking, the Foundation Year has a very positive impact on students' language skills and develops all four main skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking - because students are taught these four skills very well and in an academic fashion. In addition, the Foundation Year has an impact on students' progress in grammar skills because students are taught grammar very thoroughly and in detail. Furthermore, students in Foundation Year



courses are introduced to new vocabulary every day, which has a very positive impact on all four core language skills. Furthermore, the Foundation Year ensures that students always have excellent self-confidence as they improve course after course. It should be noted that when students have enough experience in all four language skills, a good level of grammar and good confidence, they are automatically motivated to study academically. All the positive points mentioned above are achieved when there is an academic foundation in the English Department.

### 2.13 Conclusion

The current study has considered *The Impact of Foundation Year on Students' Language Skills in English Department*. It is crucial to include both genders in a survey for a diverse and representative sample. Having both genders helps gain a comprehensive understanding of the population under study and prevents biases from surveying only one gender. Both genders in the survey provided similar views on each item. The following conclusions are drawn from the results of the study.

1- The Foundation Year has a positive impact on students' language skills. This is because when students take some courses in the Foundation Year they are taught how to study in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Consequently, when students are allowed to start their first academic year in the English Department they do not face any difficulties in terms of these skills because they have been taught them throughout the Foundation Year. This is the answer to the first research question and it is worth mentioning that the first hypothesis of this study is verified.

2- The Foundation Year prepares students academically for subsequent academic studies in the English Department. This is because students are taught all language skills and the rules of grammar in detail. When students have a high proficiency in grammar they do not have many difficulties with regard to all language skills because they are able to express themselves easily. It is worth noting that in the first year of the undergraduate degree in the English Department, some modules such as reading, writing, listening, speaking and grammar are taught. When students are taught the basic rules and provided with information about the above-mentioned modules in the foundation year, it means that they do not face any difficulties in their academic studies in the English Department, especially in the first year of their studies. Moreover, the Foundation Year helps students have self-confidence, know how to prepare assignments, and learn new words on a daily basis. Therefore, it can be said that the Foundation Year prepares students academically for subsequent studies in the English Department. Therefore, this is the response to the second research question. Furthermore, it is worth stating that the second hypothesis of this research is verified.

### 2.14 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

- 1- Carrying out research into the impact of Foundation Year on students' language skills in other departments, where another language is the target language of the study.
- 2- Carrying out research into the foundation year curriculum to determine the best academic curriculum.

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### Appendix (1)

#### The list of Jury members.

No.	Name	Qualification	Academic Status	Specialization	University
1	Dr. Fatimah R. Hassan Al-Bajalani.	PhD	Professor.	Applied Linguistics.	Salahaddin
2	Dr. Suhaila Hameed Majeed.	PhD	Professor.	Linguistics.	Salahaddin
3	Dr. Abbas Fadhil Lutfi.	PhD	Professor.	Linguistics.	Salahaddin
4	Dr. Lanja Abdulrazzaq Al-Dabbagh.	PhD	Asst. Prof.	English language & linguistics.	Salahaddin

### Appendix (2)

Dear Respondent,

My name is Sangar Othman Ibrahim; this survey is for an academic study entitled "The Impact of Foundation Year on Students' Language Skills in English Department". You are kindly required to participate in the survey by choosing a choice for every item and provide your views. I assure you that your name and the information you provide will remain confidential and anonymous. Also, you are free to withdraw whenever you want. "By selecting 'YES' to the question below, you confirm that you have understood this and consent to participate in the survey under the confidentiality conditions stated".

**Do you consent to taking part in this research survey? YES/ NO**

**Name:**

**Place of Work:**

**Gender:** Male                      Female.

Please circle the response that most accurately reflects your opinion for each of the following statements, where 1= Strongly disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Neutral (N), 4= Agree (A), and 5= Strongly Agree (SA). Moreover, provide the reasons for your choice of every item.

No.	Items	How you feel about the statement				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	The foundation year significantly enhances students' reading skills by introducing essential concepts and strategies. ....					
2	Completion of the foundation year notably improves students' capacity to express ideas clearly and effectively in writing. ....					
3	Foundation year courses have a very positive effect on students' ability to speak academically. ....					
4	The foundation year plays an important role in developing students' listening skills. ....					
5	The foundation year in terms of language learning significantly contributes to students' understanding of					



	grammar rules and structures. ....					
6	Foundation year courses play a positive role in boosting students' confidence with regard to their academic studies. ....					
7	The foundation year increases students' motivation with regard to university studies. ....					
8	All students admitted to the university should attend foundation year courses. ....					
9	After successfully completing foundation year courses, students feel excellently prepared for university study. ....					
10	A foundation year on its own has a positive impact on improving students' language and academic performance. ....					